

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 3, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Cochran:

Thank you for your efforts and leadership to move forward with the 2013 Farm Bill, legislation that is critically important to North Carolina's farmers and economy. As you develop the bill, I hope you will consider including the following requests in the Committee mark.

- **Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (Sec. 2501)**

The Sec. 2501 Program provides technical assistance to historically underserved producers in successfully acquiring, owning, operating, and retaining farms and ranches. The Program also helps to ensure equitable participation in USDA programs.

The 2012 Senate Farm Bill (S.3240) provided \$5 million a year in mandatory funding for the Sec. 2501 Program, while the bill (H.R. 6083) approved by the House Agriculture Committee included \$10 million in annual mandatory funding. These totals are a significant reduction from the 2008 Farm Bill, which authorized \$75 million in mandatory funding between FY2009 and FY2012.

I applaud the Senate Agriculture Committee for expanding this program to include military veterans, and I ask that they be made eligible again in the 2013 bill. I also request that the Committee authorize mandatory funding for the program at no less than the amount in H.R. 6083; and if possible, at an amount closer to that authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill.

- **Economic Adjustment Assistance Program (EAAP)**

The textile industry has long been an integral part of North Carolina's economy. However, since 2000 the industry has been buffeted by a series of events – the Asian currency crisis, China entering the WTO, the end of quotas, and recessions.

From 2000 through 2012, textile employment in North Carolina declined from 128,400 to 34,700. There are, however, indications that the textile industry in my state is beginning to recover.

EAAP has been documented as stimulating new investment in textile plants and manufacturing equipment, which has resulted in increased domestic cotton consumption and jobs.

The 2012 Senate Farm bill maintained EAAP. However, the program was not included in S.10, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013.

Maintaining EAAP is vital to North Carolina's textile and cotton producing sectors, and I strongly urge the Committee to include EAAP in the 2013 Farm Bill.

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. This program offers financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

To ensure that producers in North Carolina and nationwide are aware of the information needed to participate in conservation programs, I request that the Committee include the following report language:

The Committee is concerned that not all producers may be fully aware of all of the services, practices, components, and other information needed to participate fully in farm bill conservation programs. The Committee expects that State NRCS offices shall post, in a readily accessible and understandable form, the practices available that may be applicable to various livestock species and crops. These postings shall also include the cost-share levels available and the duration of the contract for a particular practice.

We also encourage the agency to continue to make their staff available to attend meetings of agricultural producers at the local, State and national level to educate and inform producers of the programs available to meet natural resource and energy efficiency needs on their operations.

- **Plain Language for Crop Insurance**

During the Senate's consideration of the Farm Bill last year, I offered Senate Amendment #2366 to require the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) to use clear, concise and easily readable

information about federal crop insurance programs. In addition, the amendment requires USDA to improve their Web site so that farmers have easy access to clear information about existing and new crop insurance policies. I request that you include the same language the Senate passed by unanimous consent last year.

Thank you again for considering these requests. I look forward to working with you both to enact a Farm Bill into law this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kay R. Hagan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kay R. Hagan
United States Senator